

Using Social Marketing to Improve Implementation of Growth Management in Maine Coastal Towns

I. Background / Introduction

Since its inception in 1978, a foundation of the Maine Coastal Program has been its provision of technical planning assistance for coastal cities and towns, aimed at helping localities balance growth and development -- to protect important coastal resources, while enhancing coastal community development. While the nature of our technical assistance program has changed over the years to correspond to municipal needs, since the passage of the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act in 1988, a major focus of the program has been on growth management, i.e., assisting towns and cities with developing local comprehensive plans and land use ordinances and reviewing those plans for consistency with Maine's ten statutory goals and nine coastal policies.

Since 1991, Maine's Growth Management Program has been voluntary. Municipalities that choose to engage in certain regulatory techniques, notably zoning, must prepare comprehensive plans, consistent with Maine law. Recent legal tests of Maine's statutory growth management scheme have affirmed the required connection between local land use ordinances, local comprehensive plans, and state law, which has motivated many communities to take their planning efforts more seriously. Maine's growth management program has achieved some notable successes such as:

- Preserving natural resources
- Identifying areas suitable for economic development
- Improving code enforcement
- Preserving highway capacity
- Expanding waterfront access
- Helping communities frame issues for discussion
- Spawning a wide range of local, "grass roots" planning activities and working groups to implement various strategies in comprehensive plans

Despite these successes, land development (and a changing pattern of development) continues to negatively impact Maine's coastal resources and coastal community vitality. There are indications that plans are inconsistently implemented, and that the implementation strategies have not made the impact on development patterns that were anticipated.

Selected statistics from recent studies document this sprawling pattern of development and its effects. Nearly one of every two Mainers lives in the coastal zone, and more than six million people visit the coast each year.¹ Even in a period of relatively slow growth (compared with the pace of the 1980s), upwards of 4,000 new housing units and hundreds of thousands of square feet of commercial and industrial space are being added annually in Maine². Portland is the ninth fastest growing metropolitan area in the nation³. Our pace of land consumption far exceeds our levels of population growth. Between 1970-1990, land development in Maine occurred at four times the rate that population increased,⁴ and that trend is anticipated to continue. As former SPO Director Evan Richert calculated, "At the

¹ Maine Coastal Program website, http://www.state.me.us/mcp/about_mcp.html

² Maine State Planning Office, 2000 Strategic Plan, p 14.

³ Indicators of Livable Communities, A report by the Land and Water Resources Council, January 2002, p.1

⁴ Ibid

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present rate, land consumed by development will double again by 2010 and by 2020 much of Maine south of Androscoggin and Sagadahoc counties will look and act like the ring roads around Boston.”

This sprawling pattern of development is causing us to lose much of what is good about Maine. The percent of Maine’s population that live in service center communities has declined to 44% of the State’s population (down from 59% in 1960)⁵ and vacant downtown buildings are common in many Maine cities. Children can no longer walk to neighborhood schools. Once-residential streets are clogged with commuter traffic. Community post offices and stores are being located in strip malls. Farms are being abandoned. Forestlands are changing hands and becoming fragmented. More than half of Mainers never walk to services or shops from their homes.⁶

In addition to environmental and social costs, the economic cost to service shifting populations with new roads, schools, and emergency services is enormous. ***Sprawl costs the state of Maine more than \$50 million per year*** in duplicative services (school buses, new schools, roads) and it costs municipalities millions more.⁷

Three short term task forces worked in 1999, 2000 and 2001 to study aspects of growth management in Maine. Two internal evaluations of the Growth Management Act (required every three years by statute) have likewise made recommendations that have resulted in incremental changes to the state’s administration of the program. Other efforts (discussed below) are in progress to determine the future of Maine’s smart growth program and by design, the future direction of our technical assistance program for coastal towns. However, none of the evaluations to date have included in-depth case studies of coastal towns, nor did the efforts incorporate socio-economic research and social marketing.

Mainers have been reluctant to embrace regulatory and non-regulatory strategies that professionals in the planning field recommend to direct growth. Our market research has clearly shown that there is a market for dense development (3-5 single family detached residential units per acre). When tested, subjects express a strong desire for well-designed neighborhoods with this density, which are anticipated to have a more manageable effect on the coastal environment and coastal resources than traditional sprawling development. However, when regulatory standards are proposed for local ordinances that allow these densities to be constructed, they often become the target of local opposition groups that are able to defeat them. Maine needs a clear strategy to convince municipalities to allow and encourage the pattern of development that is desired by those interested in protecting the coastal environment and water-dependant economy, as well as serving a significant segment of the real estate market. Maine must convince both municipal officials and developers that allowing and constructing such developments is not risky.

⁵ Indicators of Livable Communities, A report by the Land and Water Resources Council, January 2002, p.2

⁶ Research Report, The Maine Survey: Recreational Site Prepared for the State Planning Office by Market Decisions, Inc., November 2002

⁷ Indicators of Livable Communities, A report by the Land and Water Resources Council, January 2002, p. 1

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In this project, the coastal fellow will:

- Study the implementation and effectiveness of local comprehensive plans in Maine communities via case studies, interviews and surveys to determine what impacts land use planning has had “on the ground.” This evaluation will be conducted in a manageable sample of Maine’s 136 coastal towns.
- Research, develop and test (via focus groups, surveys or other methods) alternative growth management concepts for Maine’s coastal municipalities.
- Develop and apply a smart growth social marketing campaign to influence the individual behavior of homebuyers, developers, and municipal officials.
- Make recommendations for statutory and programmatic changes and development of new tools to apply these alternative growth management measures.
- Further develop the “coastal towns” section of the Maine Coastal Program’s webpage.

Several state and non-governmental initiatives now underway will support this project:

- Resolve 73 enacted during the last legislative session required that the State Planning Office review the Growth Management Program and make recommendations to improve it. The Resolve required a report back to the Legislature by February 1, 2006. Although the timing of this review is out of synch with the proposed Fellowship Project, the report will clearly articulate areas for additional research and will help shape the Fellow’s final workplan.
- GrowSmart Maine⁸ has commissioned a study by the Brookings Institution to outline a plan for Maine’s economic future, similar to the work Brookings did in Pennsylvania (entitled Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania, and available at www.brookings.edu/es/urban/publications/pa.htm). This work is expected to be completed by late Fall 2006, but the marketing aspect of this project will be ongoing well beyond 2006.
- The Community Preservation Advisory Committee (CPAC) is a Legislatively appointed standing committee that works on growth management issues on an ongoing basis. CPAC will function as an oversight committee for this project and the fellow’s findings and recommendations will be incorporated into CPAC’s annual report to the Maine Legislature.

II. Goals and Objectives

Goal: Evaluate how effective coastal towns and cities have been in implementing comprehensive plans, including identifying both the successes and barriers to developing effective land use policies, including ordinances, capital investments and other strategies. Identify opportunities to institutionalize new approaches to manage growth in Maine’s

⁸ GrowSmart Maine is a private non profit advocacy organization similar in mission and scope as the “1000 Friends of...” groups established in other parts of the country.

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coastal communities that are feasible, cost-effective, practical, successful and supported by stakeholders.

Objective 1A – Through research, interviews, surveys, case studies and focus groups (and with the assistance of interagency partners) evaluate the effectiveness of Maine Growth Management Act. Include in-depth case studies in at least 10 coastal communities and make recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Act.

Objective 1B – Create and test a social marketing program designed to influence individual behaviors related to the location of development. Identify the products necessary to facilitate the successful implementation of the Growth Management Act's goals, including the nine coastal policies.

Objective 1C – Field test the ideas identified in 1A and 1B through additional focus groups, meetings or other venues involving representative groups of stakeholders.

Objective 1D – Prepare recommendations for consideration by Maine's Community Preservation Advisory Committee for integration of growth management principles, policies, plans, etc. into statutes, regulations, grant programs, marketing campaigns, etc.

III. Milestones and Outcomes

Spring '06	Fellow interview and selection
August '06	Fellow starts
(Ongoing)	Meetings with state agencies, other partners, and Community Preservation Advisory Committee
Early Fall '06	Orientation to project, people, equipment, resources, and work completed to date
	Complete detailed project workplan
Winter '06	Completed compilation and analysis of existing reports
	Select case study towns
	Work with SPO Land Use Team and interagency partners to finalize case study methods
Spring '07	Begin case study research
	Design and conduct survey to test values issues and gauge issues
	Conduct Focus Groups or similar research to enhance understanding of problems
Summer '07	Presentation at Coastal Zone '07 Conference
Summer '07	Begin formulating recommendations
Fall '07	Presentation at GrowSmart Maine Annual Summit
	Finalize case study research
Fall '07/Winter '08	Finalize statutory, policy, and regulatory recommendations
	Complete research and recommendations on a social marketing campaign that will enhance the viability of the GMA
Late Spring '08	Presentation at The Coastal Society Conference

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Spring/Summer '08 Project evaluation and finalization of recommendations for institutional and program changes (report to Community Preservation Advisory Committee)

IV. Project Description

This proposal presents the opportunity for a two-year fellowship project at the Maine State Planning Office to assess the implementation of comprehensive plans and recommend alternative enabling legislation and social marketing techniques to improve overall growth management in Maine's coastal municipalities.

Task 1 – The first stage of the project will involve the Fellow's orientation to Maine, staff, geographic setting, existing law, existing regulatory and marketing schemes and to potential partners who are currently collecting land use data. This will allow the Fellow to develop a solid working relationship with interagency partners, staff at coastal towns and regional planning commissions and the state's Community Preservation Advisory Committee to understand their goals and objectives. The Fellow will develop a planning strategy and workplan that identifies specific objectives and tasks.

Task 2 – During the second stage of the project, the Fellow will undertake research and complete case studies regarding the efficacy of existing law and growth management techniques at achieving the goals they were intended to achieve. The research will include the use of existing spatial and statistical data in addition to original research, data collection and analysis.

At this stage of the project, specific GIS and statistical training opportunity(ies) will be provided if needed to build needed skill levels.

Task 3 – Grounded in the data and current status of the Growth management Act, the Fellow will then direct attention to external data and information. Special attention will be paid to analyzing information for its potential for use in Maine. The Fellow will use examples in the US and abroad, and through surveys and focus groups, help elicit ideas from local stakeholders about alternative growth management techniques that they expect will work in coastal Maine towns.

Task 4 – The Fellow will then work with SPO staff to analyze the data and make statutory, policy, and implementation strategy recommendations related to growth management and smart growth to enable the long term viability of Maine's coastal communities as vibrant, unique places that support a marine and resource based economy, tourism, mixed residential and commercial uses, and a healthy ecosystem.

Task 5 – After completion of policy and strategy recommendations to effect land use change from a policy and regulatory perspective to meet the goals of the Act and the nine coastal policies, the Fellow will update and enhance the market research done by the State Planning Office. This is expected to augment the regulatory and non-regulatory governmental actions affecting development patterns. The Fellow will work along with agency partners, but would take the lead role on one or more the following:

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- development of sound data and analysis regarding individual motives for choice of residence,
- development of marketing programs to influence behavior to match desired outcomes
- Implement aspects of the marketing program through various media and other outlets.

The specifics of these tasks are intended to be flexible to adapt to the project as it unfolds and to appeal to the talents of the particular Fellow chosen to work on this effort. The products for each of these tasks will provide content for MCP's web site.

Summary of Skills, Expertise and Career Interests Sought

The fellow should have interest and experience in project evaluation, social marketing, land use planning, coastal planning and policy. Good people skills will be essential as the individual will interact with a wide range of people and positions in government and the private sector and need to solicit and assemble information from a variety of sources.

Key adjunct skill sets are familiarity with survey techniques, facilitation methods, and statistical analysis, databases, spreadsheets, and GIS. The compilation of data sets from what may be disparate sources will be an important part of the fellow's work as will the collection and analysis of original data. The fellow should be comfortable conducting research and analyzing data collected to complete a thorough evaluation of the program.

V. Fellow Co-Mentoring

Maine's Coastal Fellow will be "co-mentored" by Matthew Nazar, Director of Maine's Land Use Program and Sue Inches, Deputy Director of the Maine State Planning Office. Co-mentoring will provide the coastal fellow with exposure to staff at SPO with expertise in government policy and regulatory projects as well as public and private sector marketing and communications experience.

Matt has managed the Maine Land Use Program for the past year and has been with the program for a total of six years. His career has included work as a regional planner in southeast New Hampshire, and municipal planner/economic development director/code enforcement officer in Littleton, New Hampshire. He has been involved in authoring and implementing all aspects of local comprehensive plans during his career, from major business recruitment, to Main Street redevelopment, to stormwater management, to hazardous waste disposal programming, and all aspects of local land use regulation including enforcement. Sue Inches is Deputy Director of the State Planning Office and has worked to develop natural resource policy in state government for eight years. Her career has also included directing market research and marketing and communications programs in government and in the private sector.

The CSC Fellow will become a participating member of the State Planning Office and Maine's networked Coastal Program and expected to interact freely on a peer level. Although the Fellow's primary responsibility will be to complete this project, we expect the Fellow to engage in other projects as time permits to enhance his/her professional

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development. Because this project has multiple partners, the Fellow will frequently interact with other members of State government and non-governmental organizations.

Understanding that few Fellows can step in to an unfamiliar environment and begin work, Nazar will provide on the job training as needed. Advanced training will be made available if needed. Other opportunities for growth are described below under Cost Share.

VI. Project Partners

NOAA/Coastal Services Center – SPO will consult regularly with personnel at the Coastal Services Center who are active in CSC's application of social science techniques to coastal management. Because this project involves the development of an evaluative tool, the Center's training in project design and evaluation may also be of use to the Coastal Fellow.

Regional Planning Commissions – The State Planning Office supports coastal regional planning commissions each year through general fund appropriations and CZM grants for routine municipal technical assistance and special projects. Depending on the location of the case study towns, two or more regional councils will participate in this project. SPO staff meets twice annually with regional councils and will seek their advice about selection of case study towns, involve them in creating a detailed workplan for the project, and will contract for their assistance with implementation of the project.

Coastal Towns – A sample of Maine's 136 coastal municipalities will be chosen at a later date for participation in this evaluation. Population, geographic distribution, level of planning capacity, anticipated growth rate, and municipal issues of concern will form the core criteria for how these communities will be chosen. The newsletter of the Maine Coastal Program – Coastlines – will provide regular project updates to all coastal municipalities and MCP's website will be used for transfer of information about the project.

State Agency Partners – Maine's networked coastal agency partners review local comprehensive plans and provide input to SPO staff. Staff at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection have an active interest in working with towns earlier in their planning processes to better incorporate state environmental priorities into local plans. This project will provide an opportunity to further explore improvements with DEP. Likewise, Maine Department of Marine Resources has been working with SPO to improve the quality of state level data provided to coastal towns to help them develop local marine resource plans and working waterfront strategies. Again, there will be opportunities through this Fellowship project to improve this flow of information and to ultimately improve community management of marine resources.

Community Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC) – CPAC is a standing committee appointed by the Maine Legislature to address issues related to community planning and smart growth. CPAC submits an annual report to the Maine Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources and its members continue to champion improvements to Maine's growth management program. CPAC will receive regular updates on the Fellowship project, will help advise its direction and incorporate recommendations into its annual legislative report. Exposure to CPAC will provide the Coastal Fellow with experience with a high-level policy committee.

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Potential Additional Partners

US Environmental Protection Agency – EPA has been supportive of Maine’s Smart Growth Program. SPO staff has had previous discussions with EPA staff regarding development of a media marketing campaign for smart growth. EPA staff will be consulted early in the proposed project to identify potential partnership roles.

Maine Sea Grant – Maine Sea Grant has just been awarded EPA funds to work with the Town of Wells to improve the protection of ecological functions of coastal streams in their land use plan and ordinances. Sea Grant proposes a review of other towns’ comprehensive plans as part of this project. There may be some synergies with the Sea Grant project that will be explored early on.

Maine Municipal Association (MMA) – The MMA is an influential lobbying entity in Maine working on behalf of municipalities at the Legislature. MMA also provides significant technical assistance and legal advice to municipal members regarding growth management. MMA staff will be consulted early in the process to identify potential partnership roles.

VII. Cost Share Description

The State of Maine will contribute both in-kind services and a \$15,000 non-federal cash match from the State Planning Office budget. Other costs associated with the project such as survey costs, contracts, etc. (to be determined at a later date) will be incorporated into the Maine Coastal Program’s application for federal assistance from NOAA for each of two grant years corresponding to the fellow’s term of work and some additional non-federal funds will be allocated to this project from SPO’s budget. A significant contribution from the State Planning Office will be made in the form of in-kind services, including office space, personal computer, e-mail, telephone, supplies as required, and access to the state motor pool.

Standard software supported by the Office includes Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Access, Outlook, and PowerPoint) and ESRI products. The Department is PC-based with each staff member having at least one computer. Loaners and specialty computers for fieldwork are also supported and available through prior arrangement. The Office employs computer support staff to provide technical support during working hours.

Because the CSC Fellow will be part of the Office, he or she will have equal access to all training offered to permanent staff as well as special training identified as needed. The Office participates in the State Personnel Training Program that offers a wide array of over 40 courses such as software training, personnel management, grant writing, Meyers-Briggs, etc. In addition, Department personnel have specific advanced expertise that can be made available to the Fellow through hands-on tutoring. Limited funds to attend conferences are also available and distributed on a priority basis. Funding for conferences and out of state travel will be made available through the State Planning Office, Maine Coastal Program.